

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4501

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 3492

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION UNIFICATION TREND

REF: NEW DELHI 3491

1. THE RELEASE OF BLD CHAIRMAN CHARAN SINGH REPORTED REFTTEL COINCIDES WITH STRONG INDICATIONS THAT THE NON-COMMUNIST OPPOSITION IS MORE SERIOUS THAN EVER ABOUT MERGING INTO A COMMON PARTY. JAILED OPPOSITION LEADER ASHOK MEHTA (CONGRESS-O CHAIRMAN) AND L.K. ADVANI (JANA SANGH PRESIDENT) HAVE REPORTEDLY WRITTEN TO THEIR FOLLOWERS THEIR INTENTIONS TO FORM A UNITED "JANATA" CONGRESS PARTY. (NOTE: BY KEEPING THE "CONGRESS" LABEL, THE ANTICIPATED PARTY COULD LAY CLAIM TO THE SIZEABLE CONGRESS-O ASSETS DATING FROM THE 1969 CONGRESS SPLIT.) LOK SABHA JANA SANGH LEADER, A.B. VAJPAYEE, PRESENTLY OUT ON MEDICAL PAROLE, TOLD A JANA SANGH COLLEAGUE THAT HE INTENDS TO BEND EVERY EFFORT TOWARD FORMING A ONE PARTY OPPOSITION TO CONGRESS.

2. J.P. NARAYAN IS REPORTED TO BE A STRONG ADVOCATE OF A SINGLE UNITED OPPOSITION PARTY AS OPPOSED TO THE MORE
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DECENTRALIZED FEDERATION THAT THE JANATA FONT WAS MOVING

TOWARD BEFORE THE EMERGENCY RESTRICTIONS ENDED ALMOST ALL POLITICAL ACTIVITY. AN AHMEDABAD PRESS SOURCE CLOSE TO NARAYAN TOLD OUR BOMBAY LOCAL POLITICAL SPECIALIST THAT NARAYAN IS URGING FORMATION OF THE PARTY SOONER RATHER THAN LATER, WITH THE COMMON FOCUS OPPOSITION TO THE EMERGENCY AND THE LOSS OF INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS. ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE, VIRTUALLY ALL JF LEADERS ARE COOPERATING IN A CURRENT ROUND OF EFFORTS TO COMBINE FORCES.

3. COMMENT: ONE OF THE DISAPPOINTMENTS OF POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN DEMOCRACY WAS THE INABILITY OF INDIA'S MANY TINY, DIVIDED AND OFTEN PAROCHIALY INCLINED OPPOSITION PARTIES TO OFFER A CREDIBLE CHALLENGE TO CONGRESS. THOUGH THE EMERGENCY PROVIDED A UNIFYING SHOCK, MANY IF NOT ALL OF THE OLD PERSONALITY, REGIONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL DIVISIONS WILL REMAIN TO FRUSTRATE SOLIDARITY. FURTHER, UNDER POST-EMERGENCY CIRCUMSTANCES, IT REMAINS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER MRS. GANDHI WILL ALLOW FREE ELECTIONS IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT THE OPPOSITION DOES MANAGE TO PUT TOGETHER A CREDIBLE OPPOSITION.

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